Running and Answering Counterplans

Counterplans represent a choice that a judge needs to make.

I. What is a counterplan?

A. An alternative to the Affirmative advocacy that captures all or some benefits of the plan.

B. Use counterplans to avoid having to accept really negative impacts of the Negative position.

C. Differences between policy and LD counterplans.

1. In policy, there are plan exclusive counterplans. (The USFG should establish a policy substantially supporting peace keeping operations vs. increase troop strength in SE Asia and don’t do airlift.)

2. In policy, there are plan exclusive counterplans. (Same plan vs. plan minus Georgia.)

3. If the Affirmative position is to defend the whole resolution, then a competitive counterplan must be plan exclusive and cannot be topical. If the burden is not whole resolutional, then the Affirmative advocacy is only a portion of the resolution: Negative can then defend a topical counterplan.

a. In college and high school policy debate, nobody believes that the Affirmative has a full resolutional burden.

b. In LD, topical counterplans are unpopular, it is rising. Many judges on the national circuit now believe that once Affirmative picks an advocacy, Negative can run other counterplans.

4. In policy, no topic is ever chosen where the Negative is not the status quo. Thus, Negative can always advocate the status quo. In LD, you must win uniqueness evidence or that the Negative represents the status quo.

II. The Elements of a Counterplan

1. The text: a statement of the counteradvocacy.
2. Be specific.
3. Be clear.
4. Know what you’re fiating.
5. Competition
6. Whether the counterplan forces choice. A counterplan is only a reason to vote Negative because it cause the judge to say we can either do the Affirmative or the Negative.
7. Use the concept of opportunity costs to better understand competition. The cost is both explicit cost and the cost of not doing something else.
8. Two ways to justify:
   1. Mutual exclusivity: It is literally impossible to do both.
   2. Net benefits: It is possible to do both advocacies, but it would be undesirable to do both. Winning a DA to the Affirmative is not necessarily a net benefit. The net benefit must solve for the Affirmative and more.
   3. An additional benefit to the counteradvocacy is not a reason why it is competitive unless they are mutually exclusive. You should always win disadvantages to the Affirmative to make your counterplan a stronger alternative.
   4. When the competition is a net benefit, competition is still there, but not as obviously. Thus, win harms on the Affirmative through turns or disadvantages.
   5. If the counterplan solves for 100% of the Affirmative’s harms, you only need a risk of a net benefit. Every time you run a counterplan, claim that you solve 100% of the Affirmative because it forces the opponent to win a solvency deficit argument. As Affirmative, however, answer every solvency claim that your opponent makes.
9. Solvency
10. How you solve for the Affirmative’s harms.
11. You need evidence to prove this.

III. Types of Counterplans

1. Agent Counterplans
2. Do the same action with a different actor.
3. Rarely mutually exclusive because many actors can take same action.
4. Process Counterplans
   1. Do with different part of same actor
5. Exclusion Counterplans
   1. Do the entire Affirmative except a certain part.
   2. Competitive through mutual exclusivity and net benefits. You can’t do the entire Affirmative and only a part of it.
   3. Be careful with this counterplan because you might not have a right to the counterplan if the Affirmative burden is categorical.
   4. Go this route when the text of the resolution supports your idea through a qualifier, superlative, or an argument that the Affirmative burden must be categorical.
6. Consultation Counterplans
   1. Consult another actor and then do the plan. This means you must have evidence saying that the other actor would say yes.
   2. A good thing to include is an argument for why Affirmative must take action immediately. This gives you more access to arguments that say we should wait.
   3. Consider theory.
7. Delay Counterplan
   1. Do the Affirmative advocacy after waiting a certain amount of time.
   2. Consider theory.

IV. The Status of a Counterplan

1. Unconditional
2. Negative will defend the counterplan as an option throughout the entire debate no matter what.
3. Conditional
4. Negative can jettison the option at any point in the debate, even if Affirmative turns it.
5. Dispositional
6. Negative can dispose of the counterplan based on an agreement with the Affirmative.
   1. The counterplan can be dispositional if Affirmative tries to perm it. If the counterplan is not competitive, it should disappear.
   2. If Affirmative runs theory against the counterplan, Negative can kick it. You still may have to answer the substantial theory.
   3. If Affirmative straight turns the net benefit, Negative should be allowed to kick the alternative because it is no longer an opportunity cost, but the Affirmative should still have access to the turned net benefit. Disadvantages to the alternative, however, disappear.
7. As Affirmative, ask the status of the counterplan.

V. How to Answer a Counterplan

A. Permutation

1. Affirmative’s advocacy in the 1AR

2. Test of competition for whether you can do both and whether one is net beneficial.

3. “If the counterplan is not mutually exclusive or net beneficial, it is not an opportunity cost to the Affirmative advocacy. If it is not an opportunity cost to the Affirmative advocacy, it does not force choice, and therefore, it is not a reason to vote Negative.”

4. Legitimate permutations

a. Do all the Affirmative and the counterplan.

b. In complete permutation: Do all the Affirmative and part of the counterplan.

5. Illegitimate permutations

a. Timeframe: does one and then the other. Further, it is an intrinsic perm because it adds new clauses to the Affirmative and the counterplan.

b. Severance: do only part of the Affirmative and all or part of the counterplan. This allows Affirmative to kick out of any harms, which is abusive.

B. Turn the net benefit

1. Link turn by showing how Affirmaive is better

2. Impact turn by showing ideology wrong

3. Internal link turn by showing ideology wrong

C. Prove that the counterplan has a solvency deficit and outweigh. If you don’t, Negative only needs a risk of net benefit.

1. Find a part of the Affirmative that the counterplan does not solve. Extend it and show why it’s so important against the disadvantage of the Affirmative and the counterplan’s net benefit.

D. Demonstrate that the counterplan is Affirmative ground.

1. Establish what the burdens are for the sides.

E. Take out the link to the standard or decision calculus, particularly when the Affirmative standard is deontological. Say they haven’t won an ethical framework that gives them access to the counterplan.

F. Theory

1. Multiple-Actor CPs when Affirmative is not Multi-Actor

2. Object Fiat – use of fiat to take away the source of the problem. (Strait and Wallace, The Scope of Negative Fiat, Wake Forest Debate Researchers Guide)

3. International Fiat – international institution is the agent that does the counterplan.

4. Utopian Fiat – says something completely unrealistic will happen.